

With negotiations finished and most of my crew's curiosity sated about what was going on in the facility and what kind of secrets it could hold, we bummed a ride back to Thila Command. It was another two-day trip, but by now, I was exhausted, mentally and physically, to the point where I was worried about fucking up any spells I might attempt to learn. So, instead of risking it and potentially wasting my time, I took the two-day trip off, relaxing and decompressing from the adventure and mentally reviewing how everything had gone.

The trip itself had been a wild success. The credits alone had been beyond substantial for a few days' work, but the loot we had gotten would massively increase the effectiveness of our fleet. With more raindrops, the *Talos Chariot* would be an incredibly effective small carrier, especially once we dumped credits into the *Brick*. While I had been extremely anxious when I reaffirmed my desire to modify our shuttle, upgrading the *Brick* to the point that it could be an effective space combat ship would increase our reach and abilities even further. We had always intended to upgrade it anyway. It might also be worth getting a dedicated pilot for it, but we would be hiring enough people at this point, so that was fine.

The naval droids, B1s specifically modified to perform various ship duties, including manning several different stations, would make us less reliant on the Rebels to staff our ship once we joined, without forcing us to hire more than a dozen crew. The BX commandos would make us a force to be reckoned with on the ground as well, and that was ignoring the B2s.

It was hard not to be proud of what we had all accomplished, and I made sure my crew knew how I felt by paying out five thousand credits to everyone. It was by far the largest amount we had earned individually and would go a long way to keeping everyone happy and showing that this venture we were on would be profitable individually and for the whole group.

By the time we arrived back at Thila Command, I was feeling mostly recovered, having a few nights of complete rest and a few days of unwinding under my belt. Once we were back, we headed directly for the *Chariot*, knowing Miru would be restlessly waiting for our return.

When we arrived, the first thing I spotted was the *Talos Chariot's* clean new paint job. The majority of the ship was soft white, with accents of an almost royal purple along its sides, the hangar bays, and its undersides. It certainly wasn't the first color combo I would have considered, but it looked good. Its name was painted in black lettering along each side of the ship, above the hangar bays.

Looking closely, I could see a new swell in the bottom of the ship, near the back end. It was seamless, and I could only tell because I knew the ship so well. According to what Miru had claimed, this would be the new and improved shield projector.

Before I could get any closer, I heard a familiar shout and the sound of pounding footsteps. I turned just in time to catch Miru, spinning her around to bleed off the impact.

"Welcome back!" She said, pulling back from the hug and moving to hug Tatnia next. "I'm glad everyone is alright!"

I smiled at her enthusiasm, shaking hands with Pola as he joined us as well. We spent a while reconnecting, talking about how the upgrades were going and how they had been on their own. Miru took us on a tour of the new upgrades on the *Talos Chariot*, showing off the new generators and the new model of the shield generator. Once we were done, we spent an hour unpacking, cleaning ourselves up, and changing before once again meeting at the *Chariot's* lounge, where Calima joined us.

"Alright, so as you might have guessed from the large deposit in your accounts, the mission was successful," I said happily. "Even with the large payout to everyone, we doubled our group credits and then some. Of course, some of that is going to be immediately put back into upgrades, but even then, with the loot we found... Mission accomplished."

We spent a while going over the raid, how it had gone, and the sudden twist of being "captured" by a rogue, insane tactical droid. When I explained the loot we brought back, Miru was ecstatic. Unfortunately, our portion of the loot would trickle in over the next few days, but in the end that was fine. Miru still had a lot of work to do on the C70, even with the Rebel's help.

"Why did you focus on getting the *Chariot* done first?" I asked. "I'm glad you did, but I'm curious as to why."

"You mentioned having a mission in mind, something about salvage?" Miru explained. "The *Intervention*."

"The what?"

"Oh, right. It's what Pola, Calima, and I have been calling the *Penance*," She admitted sheepishly. "We were brainstorming ideas while working, and that was the best one we came up with. We were going to wait until everyone was back before suggesting it, but it kinda just caught on..."

"I like it. I think it fits," I commented. "Anyone have an issue with it?"

When no one said anything save Julius, who just agreed it was a solid name, Pola and Miru high-fived.

"Alright, that settles it. The *Penance* is now the *Intervention*," I said with a nod. "You were saying?"

"Right, well, the *Intervention's* upgrades will take a few more days, and now we have a bunch of work to do making raindrops and making docking spaces for the new droids..." The

young genius trailed off in thought for a moment before shaking her head. "You've got plenty of time to get your business done before everything is ready to leave."

"That's good. Great job thinking ahead, Miru. That will make everything a little bit easier," I said with a smile.

We talked a bit more about the loot we had gotten and what Miru would have to do to get them integrated into the ships. About ten minutes in, I heard the familiar sounds of Racer whistling, beeping, and warbling through the ship before coming around the corner into the lounge.

He was followed by a super battle droid.

Tatnia, Vaz, and I were all facing the stairs, so as we saw it, we all half stood, responding to the threat without thinking. My hands glowed with a Lightning Bolt while Tatnia and Vaz both reached for their sidearms.

"WAIT!" Miru shouted. "Dammit, Racer! I told you surprising them wasn't a good idea! Guys, it's okay! Racer used his downtime to finally reprogram them!"

Slowly, the three of us sat back down, the glow of my spell fading as I reabsorbed the Mana. I could see that Vaz still had her hand on her sidearm, though.

The B2 stood at attention, its rocket arm by its side and the other pointed at the ceiling. The longer I looked, the sillier I felt for almost blasting it. It was painted with the same color scheme as the *Chariot* was, only in reverse, with the majority painted royal purple, accented by soft white lines.

"He finished them a few days ago, and we painted them up," She explained. "We have a very limited supply of rockets for them, but I have some ideas for using the extra arm when we run out. We have five of them up and running and five more in parts."

"That's great Racer," I said honestly, my heart slowly returning to its normal rate. "If you haven't started on the B1s, don't bother. I think they are best spread between both ships for spare parts for the Naval B1s we are getting. With the ten commando droids, there's no real reason to even bother with them. The B2s, though, would make a great security force for the ships, especially since we have ten more coming in. I say six for the *Chariot* and ten for the *Intervention*, with the rest deconstructed for parts."

"I would like to keep a few of the B1s together," Maru said. "Just in case we need another Dummy to crash another speeder missile or something."

"Fair, keep three or four on hand. You could always reconstruct some later."

The meeting continued for another twenty minutes or so before finally dissolving. It was decided that Calima, Tatnia, Nal, and Julius would accompany me to my mystery planet, leaving Vaz, Miru, and Pola behind. We also decided we would depart the following day. The trip was long, about five days at the absolute minimum, but much closer to a week if we found what I was hoping to find. The trip there and back alone was four days, the planet in a completely different part of the Outer Rim.

However, that wasn't bad because I needed time to learn a few spells before we got there anyway.

The morning we were about to leave, the first shipment of our loot arrived in the form of three of the Tri-fighters and half of our repair droids, the four astromechs, and one LE model. We stuck around, putting off our departure to help unload and get everything organized. Each of the droids needed to be cleaned, have their memories wiped, and thoroughly inspected for any modifications to the code and the hardware. We also took the opportunity to do the same to the protocol droid and the two repair droids that had so far been dormant on the *Intervention*.

Of course, with these new droids and the ones we knew were still coming, it was about time to do some serious rearranging. As we had discussed, most of the B1s were pulled out of their storage bays on the *Chariot* to make room, and some of the charging ports were modified to fit an astromech droid. When the *Intervention's* upgrades were done, Miru would work on adding charging bays for its complement of combat, naval, and repair droids.

When we were done shifting and moving things around, preparing a bit for what was getting delivered, we had thrown out a little under half the B1s, breaking the rest down into parts to take up even less room, with one lot to be stored in the *Intervention*, and one set in the *Chariot*. Miru had also stripped the droids we were chucking for anything useful, like power cores and the like, for her own projects, but all of that was stored in her own space.

By the time we were done shifting things around, preparing for more of our deliveries, General Syndulla hadn't returned from her trip to Alpha base. Her second in command, Commander Gadi, however, was. He was a brown noser to an annoying extent, and I got the feeling he would have done just about anything to get me to join up. I led him along for the hour that we spoke, which was mostly spent with him clumsily trying to coax me into joining. I was tempted to see what I could get out of him, but I doubted that General Syndulla would be very happy with me, especially not when she had stuck her neck out for me in our threeway deal with Nova. Instead, I just got him to agree to let me use the hangar bay for a while longer and help a bit with buying more parts.

"Of course, with Alpha Base being set up, most of our assets are on the move anyway," He assured me. "Another week or so is fine."

"That's great. We were hoping to make a few more upgrades, stock up on materials... we also want to convert the tri-fighters to the raindrops we use," I explained. "If you could spare a ship to pick up the upgrades, we could teach your engineers how to make them. No guarantees that this would be something you're interested in, but I know a few of your engineers that were working on the *Chariot* were interested in how they worked..."

"We... could spare a ship, as long as it's done in one large order," He agreed. "I will have someone come down to the hangar and discuss exactly what you want, and what it would cost. Is there anything else I can do for you Deacon?"

"No, you've done plenty already," I assured him, reaching out and shaking his damp, webbed hand.

With permission and cargo transport secured, I headed back to the *Chariot*, pulling Miru away from her work for a minute to discuss what was happening over lunch.

"Someone will be along, probably sometime later today, to discuss another shipment," I explained, stabbing at my food.

"What exactly can I get?" She asked, trying to keep her excitement down.

"Get whatever you need for the raindrops, and I want you to get upgrades for the *Brick*," I explained. "I'm leaving it here when we leave so you can work on it."

"What kind of upgrades should I look for?"

"Shields, thrusters, weapons, whatever you can find," I explained. "We got it for relatively cheap despite it being from CEC, after all."

"Well, it is on the older side," She explained. "But CEC ships usually age well, and the after-market upgrades only get better as they do. How much can I spend?"

"I'm willing to invest a lot into it, especially if you can turn it into a viable addition to our fighting force," I explained. "I've got a new appreciation for the importance of a powerful shuttle after our raid on Alpha Base. And before you say it, yes, I know we *had* a powerful shuttle, but the *Brick* makes much more sense for us than the *Dark Blade* did."

Miru laughed and nodded, taking a bit of her meal and washing it down with a drink. After a moment of eating, I continued to explain what I wanted when we were gone.

"So this trip is going to take five days, absolute minimum. Will you finish work on the *Intervention* by then?"

"Probably? Barring any unforeseen issues, we should be."

"Right, well, when the *Intervention is done*, I want you to focus on the raindrops and the *Brick*, because when those two are done, we can leave," I explained. "I know you're going to want to take a look at the BX's, but you can do that once we've left and after you've finished with the Naval B1s. I know that's a tall order, so please don't overwork yourself. Don't think they need to be done by the time I get back or anything."

"Boss, all of this is a dream come true for me," She assured me. "Shipwork, building, designing, it's what I live for! I promise not to overwork myself but don't feel bad for asking me to do more of what I love. As for getting things done in that order, that should be easy. Most of the work on the raindrops can be done by Leddy and her bots, and Racer is the one who will be doing most of the programming work on the Naval droids."

"Alright. Vaz will keep an eye on you and help with the shipments coming in, so don't be afraid to delegate."

We finished lunch, discussing some of her ideas and what I hoped to find on my trip. When we were done eating, Miru left to say goodbye to everyone coming with me before heading back to the *Intervention*. Not too long after that, we departed from Thila Command again, the newly upgraded *Talos Chariot* pulling out of the hanger and flying up into space.